



# Congressman Tim Bishop

*FIRST DISTRICT -- NEW YORK*

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **NATIONAL ENVIRO GROUPS JOIN BISHOP TO LAUNCH CAMPAIGN PROTECTING PUBLIC FROM SEWAGE-CONTAMINATED WATER**

*Bishop's new bill would require sewage operators to notify public about hazardous overflows*

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PATCHOGUE, NY—Every year, sewage-contaminated water sickens millions of Americans who unknowingly swim in it. New York City alone discharges 27 billion gallons of untreated sewage annually into surrounding bodies of water. There is no federal law requiring sewage operators to monitor for hazardous leaks or notify the public of such leaks. To address this public health threat, Congressman Tim Bishop introduced legislation establishing basic oversight and common-sense health precautions.

Today at a press conference at the Patchogue Sewage Treatment Plant, the Congressman was joined by national environmental leaders who are leading an awareness campaign to build support for his bill with the goal of its consideration and enactment.

"When it comes to public sources of water, what you don't know can hurt you," said Congressman Bishop. "I introduced the Right-to-Know Act to ensure that all Americans can protect themselves and their families from contact with untreated sewage and to reduce economic losses due to waterborne illness. Long term, requiring accurate reporting of the numerous leaks which occur will help build support for major investments in our water infrastructure so that we can continue to enjoy clean water in years to come."

"The more than 65,000 members and supporters of American Rivers and I look forward to working side by side with Congressman Bishop to solve the problem of sewage in our waters," said American Rivers President Rebecca Wodder at the press conference. "Cleaning up the water helps clean up everything around it. Cities all across the country have come to realize that a healthy river supports a thriving community. Healthy waters pump millions of dollars into the local economy, through water-based recreation, tourism, commercial and sport fishing, as well as increased property values."

"I thank Congressman Bishop for bringing attention to this important issue," said Citizens Campaign for the Environment Executive Director Adrienne Esposito. "The bottom line is that families should have a right to know what is in the water they're swimming in."

Currently, instead of clear federal regulations, there is a patchwork of regulations in states and localities. It has been estimated that between 1.8 million and 3.5 million Americans become sick every year just from swimming in waters contaminated by sewer overflows. The loss of recreational revenue due to contamination has been valued at between \$1 billion and \$2 billion while economic losses due to swimming-related illnesses are estimated at \$28 billion annually.

In addition to enforcing tougher public health standards, the bill would make sewage operators eligible for federal clean water funds to monitor their systems and to develop procedures to notify the public.

Congressman Bishop (D-NY) introduced the bipartisan Raw Sewage Overflow Community Right-to-Know Act of 2007 along with Congressman Frank LoBiondo (R-NJ).

**PHOTOS AVAILABLE:** Photos of the press conference inside the Patchogue Sewage Treatment Plant are available for download and printing: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/7307564@N03/>